

News story: UK and US strengthen maritime aviation cooperation

Minister for Defence Procurement Harriett Baldwin today signed a P-8A Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) declaration with her United States counterpart, Deputy Secretary of Defense Bob Work to further strengthen the uniquely close defence relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States.

In 2019 the UK will receive delivery of its first Poseidon P-8A aircraft and both nations have committed to deepen their defence cooperation when operating in the North Atlantic region. Through seeking opportunities to share logistics and support bases and optimise the use of P-8A aircraft, particularly in Europe, the declaration should ensure increased value for money and operational effectiveness.

Minister for Defence Procurement Harriett Baldwin said:

The United States is our pre-eminent Ally in global defence and collective security. This declaration is further evidence of how our two countries continue to cooperate and build mutual security, particularly in the North Atlantic region.

Backed by a rising defence budget and a £178 billion Equipment Plan, the P-8A programme will provide us with enhanced surveillance capabilities.

As leading members of NATO, the UK and US are committed to the collective defence of each other and their Allies. We have also pledged to deepen defence cooperation, bilaterally and within the Alliance, to further improve the ability to operate together in exercises and operations.

The declaration provides a new opportunity to maximise value for money for the taxpayer and continue to strengthen UK-US interoperability and to pursue efficiencies in operations and support, including at RAF Lossiemouth in Scotland, where the P-8A will bring some 400+ jobs. The Department of Defense and Ministry of Defence plan to cooperate closely on operation of their P-8A aircraft in the North Atlantic to ensure a coherent approach to MPA activity.

Delivering on the commitment of the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review, the UK is purchasing nine Boeing P-8A Poseidon MPAs to be based in RAF Lossiemouth, Scotland. The aircraft will add to the UK's surveillance capabilities, including conducting anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare, search and rescue and intelligence gathering.



Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin meeting Bob Work in September 2016

Deputy Secretary of Defense Bob Work said:

Today's signing of the Declaration on P-8A Poseidon Bilateral Cooperation exemplifies the importance and strength of the US-UK partnership.

This cooperation agreement ensures and deepens our interoperability and maritime patrol capabilities. Together, the US and UK will continue to deter regional threats and maintain a robust military posture.

With the first P-8A aircraft due to arrive in the UK in 2019, the RAF has ensured that we have maintained the skills needed to operate these MPAs through the 'seed-corn' programme, which has embedded former RAF MPA operators within the MPA squadrons of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA.

Air Commodore Ian Gale, Senior Responsible Owner for the Poseidon P-8A programme, said:

This agreement will enhance the UK's maritime patrol capability and further strengthen UK-US defence relations. The arrival of the Poseidon P-8A in 2019 will provide the UK with significantly increased capabilities and bring hi-tech employment to Scotland and

the wider UK.

This agreement follows Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon's [recent visit to Norway](#), where he also committed to cooperate on Maritime Patrol Aircraft operations, ensuring that the UK will continue to play a key role in delivering collective maritime security across the globe.

News story: UK Government leads Burns Night celebrations around the world

Scottish Secretary David Mundell and Foreign Office Minister Sir Alan Duncan will host tonight's reception, where guests will be welcomed by bagpipes, enjoy a whisky tasting, and listen to Scottish folk singer Katy Thompson, who will perform 'My Heart is in the Highlands' and 'My Love is Like a Red Red Rose'. In addition, Ryan Hunter, 2nd year BA Acting student from at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, will recite Burns' poem 'A Mans A Man for A' That'.

[Address to a Haggis](#)

The video shows UK Government staff and Scottish service personnel including Major Jonny Rourke, Lieutenant Colonel Gordon Mackenzie, Bombardier Steven Cunningham and Chief Petty Officer John Boyle reciting Burns' most famous work, the 'Address to a Haggis'.

Secretary of State for Scotland, David Mundell said:

This week the whole country will celebrate the life and work of Robert Burns, one of Scotland's greatest cultural icons. His works are justly famous right across the globe. From Ayrshire to Atlanta, and from Cumbernauld to Canberra, on Wednesday Burns' work will be celebrated in homes and Burns societies all over the world.

Burns' legacy remains relevant around the world, and as someone from Dumfries, Burns has always played an important part in my life. On Burns Night, I will be promoting Scotland's fine produce at a reception with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. And, of course, toasting the Bard with a wee dram of "guid auld Scotch."

Foreign Office minister Sir Alan Duncan said:

The clue is in the name – my father and many Duncans before us were born and brought up in Wick, Caithness, so I'll be in my Duncan tartan tonight.

Burns' enduring global influence demonstrates the impact of Scottish culture around the world and I know that Burns night will be celebrated all over – not just by British troops, embassies, aid workers and expats, but by people from many countries throughout the world. It shows us that Burns' appeal is as strong as ever.

News story: Iconic Sea King XZ593 gifted to Falkland Islands Museum and National Trust

Sea King XZ593 has been gifted to the Falkland Islands Museum and National Trust (FIMNT) by the Ministry of Defence. The helicopter was officially handed over to Mr Richard Cockwell OBE on behalf of FIMNT, by Commander of British Forces South Atlantic Islands, Commodore Darren Bone RN.

The Sea King helicopter was transported from Mount Pleasant Complex (MPC) to Stanley Airport via Chinook, a task that required specific expertise from the UK. The 35 mile trip took the helicopters along the length of Stanley Harbour, passing the Historic Dockyard and Museum, Victory Green and the Lady Liz shipwreck.

Upon arrival at Stanley Airport, the Sea King was formally presented to the trustees of the FIMNT, along with the aircrafts logbook and a framed photograph. Afterwards visitors at the airport were invited to explore inside the Sea King and Chinook helicopters.

Commodore Bone RN said:

For over a generation, the Sea King has been a reassuring sight across the Falkland Islands. It has gone to the rescue of Islanders, military personnel and numerous fishermen and sailors.

Commodore Bone added:

The Sea King has been a demonstrable link between the British Forces South Atlantic Islands and the Islanders and reflects the close cooperation and interaction that continues between the 2 communities. It is fitting that this aircraft should stay in the Falkland Islands.

Over its 38 years of service, XZ593 clocked up more than 17,400 flying hours.

It operated across the United Kingdom and routinely deployed to the Falkland Islands, where Sea Kings had provided military search and rescue cover since 1983. In March 2016, this aircraft conducted the very last Sea King rescue, recovering an injured sailor from a fishing vessel.

News story: Air pollution advice to the public

Updated: Air pollution advice updated for 24 January.

Widespread moderate [air pollution](#) is currently being measured across many parts of the UK today (24 January) due to still and foggy weather conditions, with some areas of high pollution across southeast England, very high pollution in London and isolated pockets of very high across eastern England.

High levels are expected across southeast England and some very high levels in London and the east of England. Moderate levels are being measured in south Wales, South West England, the East and West Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside and Northwest England. Air pollution is expected to remain low across Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Current air pollution levels are due to the continuing high pressure and associated light winds across the UK.

During periods of high air pollution adults and children with lung problems, and adults with heart problems, should reduce strenuous physical exertion, particularly outdoors, and particularly if they experience symptoms. People with asthma may find they need to use their reliever inhaler more often. Older people should also reduce physical exertion.

Anyone experiencing discomfort such as sore eyes, cough or sore throat should consider reducing activity, particularly outdoors.

For those parts of the country forecast to have very high levels of ambient air pollution, Public Health England is advising people to reduce physical exertion, particularly when outdoors and especially if they experience symptoms such as a cough or sore throat. Adults and children with lung problems, adults with heart problems, and older people, in areas where very high levels are recorded should avoid strenuous physical activity. People with asthma may find they need to use their reliever inhaler more often.

Light winds and foggy conditions are expected to continue through Tuesday (24 January), especially across southern and eastern parts. This will lead to the ongoing risk of areas of moderate air pollution levels, along with isolated pockets of high levels. Meanwhile across the north and west increasing winds should lead to air pollution returning to low levels from Wednesday (25

January).

These low levels are expected to spread to all parts during Thursday (26 January) and Friday (27 January) as stronger winds extend east across the UK.

For the latest forecasts and health advice, please visit [Defra's UK Air website](#). Alerts for high levels of air pollution are also issued by Defra via the Air UK Twitter account [@DefraUKAir](#).

Further information:

- The 5-day forecast of predicted air pollution levels is continually updated on the UK Air website, with advice from Public Health England to allow members of the public, particularly those who are most likely to be affected by air pollution, to take action.
- We also work with health charities to make sure vulnerable people are aware of any periods of low air quality.

News story: Chief of the Defence Staff strengthens UK – Romania Defence ties

He today welcomed to London General Nicolae-Ionel Ciucă, Chief of the General Staff of the Romanian Armed Forces, to discuss mutual interests and strengthen Defence ties. This follows Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon's [announcement](#) last year that the UK will send RAF Typhoon aircraft to Romania in support of the NATO Southern Air Policing mission.

General Ciucă and the Chief of the Defence Staff discussed the UK and Romania's partnership as members of NATO, UK deployments to Romania this year, and possible trade opportunities.

Chief of the Defence Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach said:

The UK shares an important Defence relationship with Romania, both bilaterally, and as part of our membership of NATO.

I was pleased to welcome General Ciucă to the UK, and continue to recognise the key role Romania plays within the Alliance, including their commitment to increase defence spending to meet the 2% of GDP target this year.

To enable the UK's contribution to NATO Southern Air Policing, RAF Typhoons from RAF Coningsby will be based at Mihail Kogălniceanu Airbase for up to four months in 2017, the Defence Secretary said at the end of last year.

Additionally, as part of multinational NATO exercises, British land forces will deploy to Romania for various exercises this summer, demonstrating the Alliance's commitments on the south-eastern flank. Defence Engagement in 2017 will also include a Royal Navy Type 45 Destroyer visit to a Romanian port.

Chief of the Defence Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach added:

Our deployments this year by land, in the air, and at sea, underline the UK's commitment to working within NATO alongside our Romanian friends.

The UK-Romania relationship was further strengthened by a [visit](#) last year by then Romanian Minister of National Defence Mihnea Motoc, who was hosted by the Defence Secretary.

During his visit General Ciucă is also due to visit the Northwood Headquarters, where he will meet senior UK military personnel from the Joint Forces Command and speak to Romanian officers based at the NATO Allied Maritime Command.